

What is MARC?

MARC stands for **MA**chine **R**eadable **C**ataloging, and it is an encoding standard that provides a framework for library catalog records. MARC also allows bibliographic records to be exchanged between systems. When you download a record from the Library of Congress or OCLC or receive a record from a vendor, you can upload the record into your local catalog because of MARC formatting.

Before we go too much further, I want to be sure to point out the difference between MARC and RDA. They both influence the bibliographic records in our catalog, and some people make the mistake of using them interchangeably, but they are not the same thing.

RDA, or Resource Description & Access, is the cataloging code that tells us what information to put into our bibliographic records and how to format this information. These rules cover things like which pieces of information are required parts of a record and how to create headings for personal and corporate names. RDA has recently replaced the Anglo-American Cataloging Rules, Second Edition, or AACR2.

MARC, on the other hand, is the encoding standard that is wrapped around the information that we've created according to RDA. When we talk about things like a 245 tag, we are referring to MARC encoding.

MARC and RDA are very intertwined. In this class, we'll be focusing on MARC, but it will be necessary to talk about the RDA code when we are talking about the content that goes into each MARC field.

MARC formatting has been around since the 1960s. It was developed by Henriette Avram, who worked at the Library of Congress. Its original use was to automate the process of printing the catalog cards that the Library of Congress distributed to other libraries, but it has become a way of distributing records electronically.

MARC has gone through several different forms and had different names to go along with those forms. When it was first created, it was called LC MARC. It was called US MARC in the 1980s, and it became MARC 21 in 2000.

MARC standards are provided for a variety of types of data. In this class, we will be talking about bibliographic data, but there are also MARC standards for authority data, community information, holdings data, and classification data.

